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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: FLEDGLING "NATIONAL PROJECT" SEEKS POLITICAL  
RELEVANCE

Classified By: Political Counselor Matt Tueller for reasons 1.4 (b) and  
(d).

¶1. (C) Summary: Billing their fledgling group as a broad-based CoR coalition that cuts across sectarian lines, organizers of the "National Project" told the media January 13 that they hope to attract as many as 145 CoR members from across Iraq's political spectrum with a common goal of fostering national reconciliation, backing up the Maliki government on Article 140 and oil/gas revenue distribution, and developing the ISF so as to "end all justifications for the continued presence of occupation forces." Initial indications reveal, however, that "National Project" impresarios may have puffed the actual participation and that the new grouping is more a talking shop of marginal but ambitious political players, mostly Sunnis who feel isolated by the recent pact between the Iraqi Islamic Party (IIP) and the two leading Kurdish parties, than a juggernaut coalition on which Maliki can rely as he faces Kurdish threats to abandon support for his government. End Summary.

Hold On, What's Our Name?

¶2. (C) The new grouping was announced with as much fanfare as organizers Osama al-Najaifi of Iraqiyyah, Khalaf al-Alayan of the Sunni Iraqi National Dialogue Conference, and Abdel Karim al-Anazi of the Shia Dawa Tanzim could muster at a January 13 press conference. The organizers told the media that they seek to build a broad-based movement that cuts across the Sunni-Shia divide to increase political participation and foster national reconciliation. They said they support further development, training, and supply of the Iraqi Army so that it can quickly assume full security responsibility and "end all justifications for the continued presence of occupation forces." They also said they wish to work with the GOI to develop a timetable for the departure of foreign forces from Iraq. Al-Alayan issued a separate statement in which he said group organizers had met PM Maliki two days ago and pledged support for Maliki, now and even in a second PM term, as long as he continued to support the unity of Iraq and the equitable distribution of proceeds from Iraq's oil and gas resources (we read this as code for a stance against Kurdish demands on Article 140, Kirkuk, and gas/oil related issues). An Embassy FSN who was present at the press conference said that when journalists asked the organizers for the name of this new grouping, they quickly huddled together in whispered conversation before announcing proudly that henceforth the group would be known as "the National Project" (al-Mashrua'al-Watani).

¶3. (C) Iraqiyyah's al-Najaifi told the media that the "National Project" plans to attract as many as 145 CoR members drawn from the parties of the three organizers, most of non-IIP Tawafuq, the Shia Fadhila Party and the Sadrists, and several small ethnic minority parties such as the Turkomen Front and a Yazidi party, thus making it a truly formidable alliance. Closer examination reveals that, for

now at least, "Project" impresarios may be overly optimistic or, at worst, downright disingenuous about their actual strength. For example, the Secretary General of Najaifi's own Iraqiyyah party told us January 14 that she was unaware of the new grouping, and the CoR bloc leader of the Shia Fadhila Party told us with some irritation that "Project" organizers had falsely claimed that Fadhila and the Sadrists intended to join the new grouping. He characterized the "National Project" not as a "coalition" but rather a "dialogue." In a January 14 conversation, IIP deputy bloc leader Ayad Sammarai spoke in dismissive terms of the new grouping and told us it was not to be taken seriously. We will monitor ongoing "National Project" formation and report any significant developments.

CROCKER